

Ms. Lisa Jackson  
Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Ariel Rios Building  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

October 25, 2010

Dear Administrator Jackson,

As people of faith, we are called to be good stewards of God's Creation and to seek justice for all of God's people. We write to you with great concern for the proposed mine in Bristol Bay, Alaska and believe that any mine in this area would threaten the health and well-being of this natural system as well as the native and fishing communities around the Bay. We believe the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a significant role to play in the proposed mine's development and urge you to initiate a 404(c) process to ensure protection for God's Creation and people in Bristol Bay.

Bristol Bay provides one of the last truly healthy and productive salmon fisheries in North America and the world. Each year, millions of salmon return to the Bristol Bay watershed to spawn. This annual run has continued to support the native Alaskan's subsistence lifestyle, hundreds of commercial fishermen and their families who fish Bristol Bay every summer, and thousands of sport fishermen for whom Bristol Bay is a "destination." In addition to the economic and community benefits that the Bay provides, the health of the salmon population ensures the health of the entire Bay including grizzly bears, bald eagles, and the whole of God's creation in the Bay.

Of particular importance to the faith community are the environmental justice implications of the proposed mine and the impact that the mine would have on native Alaskan communities in the Bristol Bay watershed. Six native tribes live in the Bristol Bay watershed, and the salmon that return to the Bay every year provide for more than 50 percent of an average native Alaskan's diet. Bristol Bay's pristine water and the salmon that thrive here are a vital part of the native Alaskan culture that has survived for centuries. A mine would threaten the health and well-being of the native communities and creation that live here.

If developed, the proposed mine would threaten all of this. Reports have shown that the Pebble Mine would be the largest open-pit hard-rock mine in North America covering more than 28 square miles with the largest dam in the world as part of the mine complex. According to the mining companies, the proposed mine would produce up to nine billion tons of waste, containing toxic substances such as aluminum, arsenic, lead, mercury, selenium and naturally radioactive material. Any release of this combination of metals and toxic substances would threaten the well-being of creation and communities in and around the Bay.

The EPA will play a large role in the permitting process of this mine and we urge you to take proactive steps that will fully explore the potential impacts that a mine of this scale would have on Bristol Bay. Specifically, we urge you to initiate a 404(c) process as outlined under the Clean Water Act which would outline the impacts of the mine's waste on the area's water quality, a vital component of God's creation, and prevent the use of the Bristol Bay watershed as a dumping ground for toxic mining waste. We look forward to working with you in protecting Bristol Bay in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

The Episcopal Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

National Council of Churches USA

Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

Contact:

Tyler Edgar

Associate Director

Eco-Justice Program

National Council of Churches

[tedgar@nccecojustice.org](mailto:tedgar@nccecojustice.org)

239-560-1560